

## Influenza Guidance

Influenza and other respiratory virus activity has been very high in Louisiana this season and ID Epi has been involved in a number of outbreak investigations. We thought it might be useful to remind everyone of some important recommendations and guidance as we go into a time of year where activity is expected to increase even more.

- All patients presenting to your facility with respiratory symptoms should immediately be placed on droplet precautions.
- Patients presenting to the ED with respiratory symptoms should be offered masks and placed separate from others, if possible.
- Education regarding hand hygiene and PPE use should be increased in an effort to reduce potential breaches in infection control. This education should be given to all staff including, but not limited to, physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists, radiology technicians, housekeeping staff, etc.
- Staff who develop fever and respiratory symptoms should be excluded from work until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicines). If respiratory symptoms persist, staff should be considered for evaluation by occupational health to determine appropriateness of contact with patients.

A list of additional recommendations for influenza-specific infection control in healthcare settings can be found at this link: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/healthcaresettings.htm>.

Long-term care facilities should be given specific guidance for an influenza outbreak. If one patient has laboratory-confirmed influenza along with additional cases of respiratory infection, an influenza outbreak is probably occurring. Attached is the summary guidance document for influenza outbreak management in long-term care facilities which includes a description of the need for early treatment and prophylaxis in these settings. It is extremely important that individual treatment not be based on a negative rapid influenza tests during an outbreak, when there is a high likelihood of false negatives. Also, if a patient becomes symptomatic while on prophylaxis they should immediately be switched to the treatment dose. In addition to the document this is a link to the full CDC page for influenza outbreak management at LTCF: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/ltc-facility-guidance.htm>

Please distribute this information among your staff as appropriate. And epidemiologist can be reached 24/7 at 1-800-256-2748 and feel free to call or email me directly with any questions or concerns.

Julie Hand, MSPH  
Epidemiologist Manager  
Influenza/Viral Respiratory Disease Coordinator  
Louisiana Office of Public Health  
Infectious Disease Epidemiology Section  
1450 Poydras Street, Suite 1641  
New Orleans, LA 70112  
phone: 504-568-8298  
cell: 504-615-5993  
ID Epi on-call: 1-800-256-2748  
fax: 504-568-8290  
[julie.hand@la.gov](mailto:julie.hand@la.gov)